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OLD . . . .

GLASGOW .

HOSPITALS.

BY . . . . .

JAMES ERSKINE,

M.A., M.B. . . . .

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BY

JAMES ERSKINE, M.A., M.B.

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## OLD GLASGOW HOSPITALS.



IN the neighbourhood of Glasgow and throughout the lowlands of Scotland there existed in pre-Reformation times numerous hospitals for the reception of the poor and sick. These buildings either formed part of, or were closely associated with, the abbeys and monasteries and other ecclesiastical institutions of the times.

The most ancient hospital established within the area of modern Glasgow was situated in the district of Polmadie. Like many of the hospitals of olden times, it was contiguous to one of the great highways of traffic. It was situated a short distance west of the stream, formerly called Mollsmyre and known afterwards as Jenny's Burn, which intersects the ground now acquired by the Corporation and forming the Richmond Park. The burn marked the boundary of Polmadie lands. The site of the *Old Polmadie Hospital* may be roughly described as lying opposite to the Richmond Park, on the south side of Rutherglen Road, which formed an ancient thoroughfare from the burgh of Rutherglen to the monastery and town of Govan. It is recorded that a Roman highway passed through Mollsmyre to Paisley, one branch road extending from it to the south, and another northward across the Clyde and through Glasgow. No clue can be found as to the date of the foundation of the hospital at Polmadie. There is no extant reference made to the existence of the hospital earlier than the reign of King Robert the Bruce. It was known by the name of St. John's Hospital, having been dedicated to that saint. A charter granted to it by the Bruce in 1316 ordered that the masters, brethren, and sisters of the Hospital of Polmadie, near Ruglen (*juxta* Ruglen), should enjoy all the privileges which they had in the time of Alexander III, King Robert's predecessor, who began to reign in the year 1249. The church and church lands of Strathblane were granted to the hospital

in 1316, and half of Little Govan was given to it by John, Bishop of Glasgow, in 1320. In 1347 the Queen of David II presented a master to the hospital, and this is the last occasion on which royalty is known to have interposed in its affairs. Between the bishops and the earls there were apparently rival claims regarding the hospital and its property, but these were finally settled in 1424, when Earl Duncan renounced all rights which he or his progenitors had assumed over the hospital and its annexed church and church lands of Strathblane. The hospital and the church were forthwith erected into a prebend of the Cathedral, and the endowments applied to improving the music in the choir. The endowments of the hospital, both accruing from Strathblane and Little Govan, were ultimately transferred to the collegiate church of Dumbarton, when it was founded in 1453. The lands of Crosshill, bounding Polmadie on the south, which belonged to the hospital, were also given over to that collegiate church. The ancient hospital of St. John, at Polmadie, may be regarded as the earliest ancestor of the Merryflats poorhouse and hospital of present times.

According to tradition there existed another hospital, in pre-Reformation times, on the south of the Clyde, which was situated on the east side of the village of Strathbungo, between what is now called Allison Street and Crosshill Burn, which district was named the Spittal Croft.

About the time Polmadie Hospital fell into disuse, a new hospital was established on the north of the Clyde by Bishop Muirhead. It was founded by him in 1460, and named St. Nicholas Hospital, and was situated near the Bishop's Castle, on land called the Stable Green (so named from its proximity to the castle stables). The present Macleod Street and the new Barony Church now occupy the greater part of the ground on which stood the old hospital and chapel. The name of the hospital was commemorated by a short street called St. Nicholas Street, forming the northern boundary of the hospital lands, which thoroughfare existed until the Townhead gasworks were abandoned, and their site purchased by the Corporation in 1878. St. Nicholas Hospital only provided accommodation for twelve poor men and a priest, who acted as Preceptor or Magister. For many years the Lord Provost of Glasgow *ex officio* has occupied the position of Magister, and has granted charters to the feuars and appointed pensioners. The annual revenues of the hospital are now given in moieties of three pounds each to pensioners, of whom there were recently on the list three men and eighteen women. In 1716 the administration



of the hospital devolved entirely on the magistrates. By 1778 the buildings were in a ruinous condition, and the Town Council took over the site and have contributed five pounds yearly to the hospital funds. In 1810 the site of the hospital and chapel was conveyed to a purchaser.

At the back of St. Nicholas Hospital there existed a small hospital called the "*Back Almous Hous.*" It was fitted up for the reception of four poor men. The time and circumstances of its erection are not known, but it seems to have been in existence long prior to 1600, when it became ruinous. The Magistrates and Town Council were patrons of the "*Back Almous Hous.*" About the year just mentioned the buildings were removed, and the site given to the four poor men as a garden. Shortly after this the merchants and craftsmen, in accordance with the letter of guildry, made provision for their respective poor, and in 1611 the Town Council divided the revenues of the Back Almshouse between these two bodies.

The Craftsmen of Glasgow in 1605 erected a hospital, called the *Crafts' Hospital, Alms House or Old Trades' Hospital*, on the site of the Parson of Morebattle's manse, adjoining the Hospital of St. Nicholas. It lodged at first five and afterwards thirteen poor freemen of trades rank. The buildings existed till about the beginning of last century, the ground which they occupied having been sold to the first Glasgow Gaslight Company, which was formed in 1817. In place of the hall at the Old Trades' Hospital, new buildings, now known as the Trades' House, were erected in Glassford Street in 1791.

Near the Stable Green an ancient hospital was founded, some fifty or sixty years subsequently to St. Nicholas, by another ecclesiastical dignitary. It was called *Blacader's Hospital*, after its founder, Roland Blacader, sub-dean of the Cathedral and nephew of the first Archbishop of Glasgow. The building was situated outside the North Port of the city, at the point where the thoroughfare now called Dobbie's Loan joins Castle Street. It was intended for the reception of wayfarers, being described as "a house of the poor and indigent casually coming thereto." Accommodation was provided for a chaplain, a keeper and his wife, and for six poor persons. In 1610 the site of Blacader's Hospital was conveyed to a feuar, and has become private property.

Still another old Glasgow hospital for the poor falls to be noticed as existing outside the East or Gallowgate Port of the city. A chapel called *Little St. Mungo* was erected in that situation, and endowed about the year 1500 by David Cunningham, an official of the See of Glasgow and Rector of

the College. By 1593 the chapel became ruinous, and it, along with the churchyard, was sold to the Town Council, on condition that it was to be used as a hospital for the poor in all time coming. The place was converted into a hospital and maintained as such for some time. Lepers and plague-stricken patients appear to have been accommodated in the hospital, as well as the indigent poor, but, in breach of their trust, the Magistrates in 1754 conveyed the site, which had become a burying-ground, to Robert Tennent, for the purpose of his erecting upon it an inn named the Saracen's Head.<sup>1</sup> On payment of ten pounds he was also allowed to use for the building the stones of the East Port, closely adjoining the site on its west boundary, that eastern gateway to the city being thereby demolished in the middle of the eighteenth century.

Passing reference may be made to the *Hutchesons' Hospital*, as providing accommodation, under its original foundation, for eleven poor old men and the same number of boys. It was founded by George Hutcheson in 1639, with the co-operation of his brother Thomas, who founded the school, the erection of the hospital buildings in the Trongate not having been started till 1641. Women as well as men were afterwards admitted as pensioners and provided with accommodation in the hospital. Nowadays the number of women on the roll of pensioners exceeds that of men. As early as 1672 there is evidence showing that certain portions of the hospital building were let to rent-paying tenants, and towards the end of the century considerable inroads had been made on the accommodation of the pensioners by outsiders. It does not appear that boys were ever accommodated in the hospital after 1652. The site was feued for the erection of buildings in 1788, and the formation of a new street, appropriately named Hutcheson Street, running from the Trongate to Ingram Street.

So prevalent was leprosy in almost every district of Scotland from the tenth to the sixteenth century, that leper hospitals were numerous all over the country. They were provided by the Church, being situated outside towns, and among certain adjuncts they had in common were a chapel and a burying-ground. The Bishops of Glasgow made the necessary provision for the accommodation of the lepers in their burgh by erecting an hospital and chapel in the district of Gorbals, on the south of the river Clyde, which formed part of the lands of Govan bestowed on the see by David I, who reigned from 1124 to 1153. The date of the foundation of the *Leper Hospital* is

<sup>1</sup> This once famous inn was demolished towards the close of 1904.  
—Ed. G. M. J.



unknown. M'Ure and other local historians have stated that it was founded in 1350 by Lady Lochow, who was Lady Marjory Stewart, but no extant records support that statement, which appears to be based on a false supposition. According to tradition, Marjory Stewart, Lady Lochow, built at her expense the third arch from the northern end of the bridge across the Clyde at Stockwell, which was erected by Bishop Rae, who presided over the diocese of Glasgow from 1335 to 1367. But it is doubtful whether the bridge was completed during that bishop's time or at a much later date. Lady Lochow's name may have become identified with the leper hospital, situated as it was in the proximity of the south end of Bishop Rae's bridge, by reason of pious benefactions she may have made to the old hospital at some time. Among such endowments, it is recorded that in 1494 William Stewart, a canon of the Cathedral, endowed it with a tenement on the south side of the Bridge Gate, and with various annualvants, stipulating that yearly, on the anniversary of his death, twenty-four poor scholars should assemble in the chapel and celebrate services for the weal of his soul and the souls of all the faithful dead. The lepers dwelling in the hospital were directed to ring the chapel bell every night, and to pray in the chapel for their benefactors. Endowments apparently were bestowed for obtaining the intercession of the inmates for the souls of the donors.

After the Reformation the Kirk Session occasionally took some interest in the hospital's affairs, but the management was mostly in the hands of the Town Council and the bailie of the river. When King Charles I in 1636 granted his general confirmation of the charters and rights of the city he included the house called "The Lipper House and called Sanct Ninianis Hospital with gardens and pertinents thereof founded on the south side of the river of Clyde, near the bridge of Glasgow, with all rents teinds and dues belonging thereto." The hospital buildings disappeared about 1730, but the chapel, which was situated further south, survived many years longer. The last notice of the hospital grounds consists of a record of the Town Council stating that in 1798 they sold a piece of vacant ground in Gorbals, fronting Adelphi Street, known by the name of Lepers' Yard. Denholm, in his *History of Glasgow*, published in 1798, states that at that time the lower part of the chapel was occupied as a parish school and the upper storey as a prison. In 1827 the old chapel buildings were sold to a purchaser for alteration to dwelling-houses and shops, and in 1866, by authority of the Town Council under

the Improvements Acts, all vestige of the ancient building was finally removed.

The existence of the Leper Hospital in St. Ninian's Croft is commemorated in the names of Hospital Street and St. Ninian Street in that district. The adjoining Adelphi Street was named after the brothers Hutcheson, the lands of Gorbals having been acquired by the patrons of Hutchesons' Hospital.

Nothing appears in the ancient burgh records regarding the provision of hospital accommodation for patients suffering from the frequent visitations of the plague, or black death, till about the middle of the seventeenth century, when temporary huts were erected for plague-smitten patients in a district outside the city. The final epidemics of plague occurred in 1645, 1646, and 1647, when booths were erected in waste lands or muir in the north of the burgh called Sighthill and Seggieholm. These erections are described in the minutes of the Town Council as "ludges" made of "dails and spairs," with straw for bedding. The councillors were appointed by turns for a week at a time to visit the plague colony. A minute of Council, dated 20th February, 1647, reads as follows:—"James Robiesonne, Baxter, is made choyce of to be visitoure of the muire quhair the oncleane fokes ar, and to set doune in a register all occurantes daylie anent the infection . . . and to tak notice of the graves."

The only other place recorded as existing in Glasgow for dealing with disease as far back as the sixteenth century consisted of a kind of ancestor to the modern Lock Hospital. It is referred to in minutes of the kirk session in the years 1592 and 1600 as the house or lodge "beyont the Stable Green Port for women affectit with the Glengore."

No institution existed in Glasgow for the general medical treatment of the sick poor before the eighteenth century. About fifty years after the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons had been instituted an unsuccessful attempt was made to make such provision. The Faculty in 1654 approached the kirk session and offered "such of their number as might contribute their best skill for the weel of the poore diseased without any payment or reward for their pains." According to the charter of the Faculty, gratuitous advice was given to the sick poor at their monthly meetings.<sup>1</sup>

The Town Council for many years provided for the necessitous poor the services of a surgeon or physician, an apothecary,

<sup>1</sup> The memory of this old custom is still kept green in the concluding sentence of the minute of each monthly meeting of the Faculty.—*Ed. G. M. J.*

and a "stone cutter." In the year 1598 Peter Lowe, the founder of the Faculty, was acting as town surgeon. But in 1684 the Town Council ceased to afford even such meagre medical assistance to poor people owing to the impoverished state of the Corporation funds.

Fifty years afterwards a movement was started to make adequate provision for the poor and sick, which resulted in the erection of the *Town's Hospital* in 1733. The necessary funds were obtained from public subscriptions and from the General Kirk Session, the Merchants' House, the Trades' House, and the Town Council. These bodies undertook the maintenance of the hospital, and a small assessment was made upon the citizens. The raising of this assessment devolved upon a number of prominent men nominated by the magistrates, the highest sum that ever was demanded being twelve shillings and sixpence upon each thousand pounds wealthy persons were supposed to be worth.

The old Town's Hospital was situated on the north bank of the river Clyde, a short distance west of Stockwell Street, adjoining St. Andrew's Roman Catholic pro-Cathedral. For many years the members of the Faculty in turn generously gave advice, attendance, and medicine gratis, the physicians holding office for a year and the surgeons for six months. No provision having been made for clinical teaching, the need of a general hospital became increasingly felt, and led to the establishment of the Royal Infirmary towards the end of the eighteenth century.

The Town's Hospital was really a poorhouse, accommodating not only the destitute poor, but such as were sick or insane, and it formed the nucleus of the vast provision of institutions administered by the Glasgow Parish Council at the present time.

As was the case throughout the country in former times, the accommodation for the insane in the old Town's Hospital was of the most inhumane description, consisting of what are described as cells. Robert McNair, of Belvidere (whose estate is now occupied by a fever hospital), was moved with pity for the sad lot of the lunatic patients in the Town's Hospital, and he urged upon his fellow directors of the hospital the necessity for adequate accommodation. A representation was made to the Lord Provost, who communicated with the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons, requesting their co-operation in establishing an asylum for the insane. The Faculty readily responded to the appeal, and subscribed £100. The building of the *Asylum in Parliamentary Road* was started in 1810, and finished in 1814.

By 1842 the accommodation was found to be insufficient. A new asylum was therefore erected on the grounds of *Gartnavel*, and opened for the reception of patients in 1843.

The old asylum in Parliamentary Road was then acquired, to be used as a poorhouse and hospital, by the directors of the *Town's Hospital*, and the poor under their charge, including the sick and insane, were transferred thereto. The buildings on the north bank of the river thus rendered vacant remained standing for some years, and were used during epidemics for the accommodation of typhus patients, under the charge of Dr. Robert Perry, who was then investigating the distinction between typhus and typhoid fever, and who is generally regarded as being the first physician to recognise and establish that distinction.

The Poor Law (Scotland) Act of 1845 instituted a State organisation for the relief of the poor, and by it parochial boards were established in what were called parishes or poor-law areas. A board was accordingly formed to undertake the care of the poor in the Parish of the City of Glasgow, and the old asylum buildings were taken over from the directors of the *Town's Hospital*, and alterations made so that accommodation might be provided for the destitute, the sick, and the insane poor.

The City Poorhouse in Parliamentary Road has continued to be known by the old name of the *Town's Hospital* up to the present time, when the buildings are about to be demolished consequent upon their passing into the possession of the Caledonian Railway Company.

The Barony, extra-burghal or Landward Parish Board acquired the mansion house and estate of Barnhill shortly after the passing of the Poor Law Act of 1845, and accommodation was first provided there for the reception of pauper patients about 1850. Temporary wooden sheds were erected near Stobcross Street, Anderston, by the Barony Parish Board in 1845 for fever patients, and were in use till 1848.

The Barony Parish, being outside the burgh of Glasgow, contained, about fifty years ago, a comparatively small number of people requiring parochial relief, but in course of time it grew to be the largest and most populous parish in Scotland. To such a degree had the city of Glasgow been extending, mainly by the inclusion of surrounding districts, that the time came when the population within and without the City Parish had to be regarded as a whole and not as belonging to two distinct parishes. It was therefore considered advisable to unite the Barony and City parishes. The union proceeded

on a representation by the Board of the City Parish in 1897, and in the following year, in consequence of a Commission of enquiry, the union took place, the board of administration being called the Glasgow Parish Council.

The buildings of Barnhill were thereupon used to house mostly cases of destitution to the number of about two thousand, while a large hospital has been erected at Stobhill to accommodate fifteen hundred persons, with two district hospitals, each for two hundred and fifty patients, the one being situated at Oakbank in Possil Road, and the other in Duke Street.

All along, both in the Town's Hospital in Parliamentary Road and in the Barony Poorhouse at Barnhill, insane patients were accommodated along with the other classes of paupers until separate asylums were erected, the one by the Barony Board at Woodilee in 1875, to accommodate at first six hundred, and now over nine hundred, and the other by the Board of the City Parish at Gartloch in 1897 to receive about seven hundred lunatics. These great mental hospitals are now termed Glasgow District Asylums, and are administered by the Glasgow Lunacy District Board, consisting of the members of the Glasgow Parish Council.

Considering this exceedingly bountiful provision made in modern times for the treatment of the insane, it is interesting to note how rare a phenomenon insanity was as recorded in this country until about A.D. 1600. Indeed, in Scotland, south of Edinburgh and Glasgow, until 1839 there was no special place of restraint or confinement, except six squalid stone cells attached to the public hospital of Dumfries, violent lunatics being restrained in their own houses, in prisons, or in police stations.

On the south side of the river Clyde, at the outset of our story, we found in the Hospital of St. John at Polmadie the oldest predecessor of the Govan poorhouse and hospital now at Merryflatts. The Parochial Board of Govan, soon after the Poor Law Act came into force, rented an old mill in Dale Street, Tradeston, and fitted it up for a temporary poorhouse and hospital, which was occupied as such for about five years. A removal was made in 1853 to buildings on the west side of Eglinton Street, which had been erected in 1821 and used as cavalry barracks for the Glasgow district. These premises were occupied as a poorhouse, hospital, and asylum until 1872, when the new buildings were erected at Merryflatts. The old place in Eglinton Street was sold by the Board to the Glasgow Tramway Company, who only occupied it for a few months, when it was bought by the Caledonian Railway Company for



the extension of their lines. Like the other two poorhouses, the insane were housed along with other paupers in Merry-flatts until 1896, when a new asylum, to accommodate about seven hundred, was erected at Hawkhead, now administered by the Govan District Lunacy Board.

In the matter of provision for the treatment of the insane, notice may be here taken of the largest and oldest private asylum in Glasgow. Its situation recalls us to the vicinity of the Cathedral, where we saw the most ancient hospitals stood. On the southern side of Garngadhill, sloping down to the valley of the Molendinar, there may be observed still standing an oblong building, a little west of Townhead Parish Church. The front of the house looked towards Garngadhill, as appears from the pillars of the principal doorway, which are still in position. This old house, now "made down" into low-class tenement dwellings, was originally the private asylum belonging to Dr. William Drury, who conducted it as such up till about 1850, when he retired and transferred the asylum to Dr. Hill, by whom it was continued till 1872. There was accommodation for eighty patients, and a staff of fifteen to twenty attendants were employed.

The familiar name of an old physician, honoured for his benefactions to local scientific and medical institutions, may justify a reference to another private asylum in the neighbourhood of Glasgow. Dr. Muirhead was the original proprietor of Kirklands Asylum, which he conducted with much success for many years. The asylum was taken over by Dr. Dean Fairless, but the original building was removed and the present handsome structure erected in the Scottish baronial style of architecture. Dr. Fairless continued to conduct the institution as a private asylum for about eight years, when in 1878 it was purchased by the Glasgow District Lunacy Board.

Before the year 1794, when the *Royal Infirmary* was opened, there was no hospital in Glasgow specially devoted to the treatment of patients suffering from disease and injury. The movement to build a general hospital, where clinical instruction would be given to medical students, was instituted in 1787 by two University professors, George Jardine, of the Chair of Logic, and Alexander Stevenson, of that of Medicine. There seems to have been no difficulty in choosing a suitable situation for the building, as at the time the proposal was made there was vacant ground adjoining the Bishop's Castle, which was then in ruins. The site was granted by the Crown, and included the northern portion of the area covered by the old castle.

The Royal Infirmary consisted at first of what is now called the "front building," about which we have heard so much since Sir David Richmond, when Lord Provost, in 1897, proposed to reconstruct it as a memorial of the diamond jubilee of the reign of Queen Victoria. The architect of this building was one of the brothers Adam, probably Robert, his name appearing over the front of Edinburgh University as the architect of that structure, which is a *fac simile* of the design of the Royal Infirmary on a larger scale. The infirmary was at first constructed to accommodate one hundred and thirty-six patients, but owing to the large number of fever patients requiring to be housed during epidemics, it was soon found to be too small. An addition was therefore built in 1816 by projecting a wing northwards. By the year 1829 it was found necessary to erect a separate building solely for the accommodation of fever patients. This "fever house," as it was called, stands to the north-east of the front building, overlooking the Necropolis. It and the surgical house to the north of the courtyard, erected in 1861, are used for patients requiring surgical treatment. During epidemics of typhus fever temporary sheds had to be erected in the grounds of the infirmary to accommodate the enormous numbers of patients.

In 1818, 60 per cent of the patients in the Royal Infirmary suffered from fever. A temporary hospital, with accommodation for two hundred patients, was erected by public subscription at Spring Gardens in 1818, and was used for about two years. It was re-opened in 1827 for about six months, and maintained by the Royal Infirmary directors. In 1831 a committee of the city magistrates was formed into what was called a Board of Health, and they secured an old cotton mill in King Street, Mile-End, for a fever hospital. In 1837 a temporary hospital was used for about a year in Albion Street. Ten years afterwards the Lock Hospital in the Rottenrow was occupied by fever patients. From time to time, as various epidemics arose, we find that the Parochial Board sent their fever patients to the Royal Infirmary, and paid for them at the rate of £1 a head.

From 1845 to 1847 the resources of the infirmary were exhausted. The old Town's Hospital, which was still standing, was used by the City Parish, and the Barony Board erected wooden sheds in Anderston, with accommodation for two hundred and fifty patients.

In 1848 the parishes closed their hospitals, and resumed paying for their patients in the Royal Infirmary, at the rate of fifteen shillings a head. By the year 1863 it was found that 50 per

cent of the cases of fever and small-pox were sent into the Royal Infirmary by the Parochial Boards. The managers intimated that they were unable to accommodate all such cases, and they raised their charge to £2 per patient. After much discussion, the Police Board "arranged to provide, under the powers they had under the Act of 1862, temporary accommodation for such cases as did not fall within the province of the parochial boards to deal with, and which it was impossible for the infirmary to take in." Nothing definite was done until in 1864 a suitable site was purchased in the district of St. Rollox, off Parliamentary Road. In the winter of that year a start was made to build, and a pavilion hospital of wood on brick foundations was erected by the month of April following, and made ready for the reception of patients. It was much needed at the time, owing to the prevalence of one of the worst epidemics of typhus.

*The Parliamentary Road Hospital* is historically notable as being the first municipal hospital in this country. It was really built for temporary purposes, but it was found to be absolutely necessary, and in the year after its erection a clause was inserted in the Police Act compelling the local authority "to maintain the present hospital erected by them in Kennedy Street." Powers were at the same time obtained to make extensions or provide other hospitals. Glasgow was, therefore, the first city in Scotland to make provision for the treatment of patients suffering from infectious diseases, and to bind itself to maintain a permanent fever hospital or hospitals.

In the following year, 1867, the Scottish Public Health Act was passed, giving powers to all local authorities to make similar provision. The old Parliamentary Road Hospital was the nucleus of the extensive hospital provision made by the Corporation of Glasgow for dealing with infectious diseases. By no means is the old hospital architecturally interesting or pleasing to view, yet during the forty years of its existence it has served a most beneficent purpose, and forms a prominent feature in the history of the hospitals of Glasgow.











